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UNITED STATES SENATE

January 30, 1961

The Honorable John F. Kennedy
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

A difficult economic situation exists in Butte, Montana and in other western mining camps relative to the fall in the price of copper and an oversupply of the red metal in this country and throughout the world. I am enclosing for your consideration a copy of a statement I intend to make on the Floor of the Senate tomorrow, and I urge, in behalf of the people of Montana as well as the rest of the nation dependent upon the copper industry, that you consider most earnestly and carefully the possibility of calling an international copper conference to stabilize prices on a worldwide basis, to encourage production on a year-round basis, and thereby to bring security to those of our people who are dependent upon copper for a livelihood.

This is an extremely important matter, and I would appreciate your utmost consideration of it.

With best personal wishes, I am

Respectfully yours,

/s/

MIKE MANSFIELD

Mr. President:

Once again the mining industry finds itself in crisis. Copper production has been cut ten percent within the past several weeks. The price of copper is now under 30¢ a pound, and large numbers of miners throughout Montana and other Western States have been laid off. In Butte, Montana, the number, according to press dispatches, amounts to 400 miners who have been released because of the decline in the price of copper and, I would assume, the oversupply of the red metal throughout the world.

Butte - which has furnished this country "the richest hill on earth" - is in difficulties not only because of this most recent cut but also because of the changeover from shaft mining to open pit operations. This changeover means, of course, that more copper can be produced with fewer men and more machines. The copper industry, like so many other mining industries, has been subjected to a "feast or famine" cycle. I believe it is high time that something be done to bring about stability to this most important segment of the economy of Montana and, for that matter, of the rest of the nation as well.

As one who has been opposed to cartels, I have come to the conclusion that in special situations they can perform a good strong and worthwhile industrial use. They have not been used in this country because of the fact that if anything along this line were to be attempted, it would very possibly come in conflict with the anti-trust laws.

After much thought and consideration, I have come to the conclusion, in view of world conditions, that the only way to face up to the ups and downs which prevail in the copper industry is a cartelization of sorts, under careful supervision, agreed to and supported by the copper producing nations of the world. It is my belief that the President of the United States should assume the initiative

and call an international copper conference for the purpose of stabilizing that industry to the extent that steady production on an agreed-to, year-round basis can be maintained and firm prices achieved which will give stability to the industry and to those employed by it.

If, in this way, an international agreement could be reached, I think we could do away with the "feast or famine" cycle, give security to our miners and smelters and their families, and give assurances to the copper industry on an international level so that they could proceed on an agreed-to, pro-rated basis to operate on a year-round schedule.

I make this plea primarily in behalf of the miners and smelters of Butte, Anaconda and Great Falls, Montana, but in doing so, I make it also on the part of those who are affected by similar circumstances in other Western States as well. Yesterday I dispatched a letter to the President of the United States urging that he undertake to lend his great influence and prestige to the calling of an international copper conference for the purpose of reaching an agreement which will bring stability to the industry and security to the workers who depend on it.

Well as the rest of the nation dependent upon the copper industry, that you consider most earnestly. I believe in an international copper conference to stabilize prices on a worldwide basis, to encourage production on a year-round basis, and thereby to bring security to those of our people who are dependent upon copper for a livelihood.

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Butte - which has furnished this country "the richest hill on earth" - is in difficulties not only because of this most recent cut but also because of the changes from their mining to open pit operations. This changeover means, of course, that more copper can be produced with fewer men and more machinery. The copper industry, like so many other mining industries, has been subjected to a "boom or bust" cycle. I believe it is high time that something be done to bring about stability to this most important segment of the economy of Montana and, for that matter, of the rest of the nation as well.

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